

Message on the Observance of Easter, 1996 *April 4, 1996*

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Easter.

Across America and around the world, Christians gather on Easter Sunday to commemorate the central event in the history of their salvation: the Resurrection of Jesus. This holy day marks that moment in time when good conquered evil, hope overcame despair, and life triumphed over death. Just as spring brings warmth and beauty to the earth after a harsh winter, Easter brings joy and new life to the spirit, reminding us that no mistake or failing of the past can put us beyond the reach of God's mercy.

In this age of great challenge and even greater possibility, Easter's timeless message strengthens us for the tasks before us. As we celebrate in churches and cathedrals, at sunrise services and in family gatherings, we remember that our lives have great purpose and value. We recognize that the life and words of Jesus call us to works of caring and compassion, to giving more than receiving. His death and resurrection are powerful reminders of how God's grace is still at work in the world in which we live today.

Hillary joins me in extending best wishes to all for a wonderful Easter celebration.

BILL CLINTON

Statement on Signing the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 *April 4, 1996*

I am today signing into law H.R. 2854, the "Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996." H.R. 2854 would authorize most agriculture programs for fiscal years 1996–2002, including commodities, credit, conservation, rural development, trade, and nutrition.

I am signing H.R. 2854 with reservation because I believe the bill fails to provide an adequate safety net for family farmers. The fixed payments in the bill do not adjust to changes in market conditions, which would leave farmers, and the rural communities in which they live, vulnerable to reductions in crop prices or yields. I am firmly committed to submitting legislation and working with the Congress next year to strengthen the farm safety net.

I am, however, keenly aware that farm legislation is long overdue and American farmers need to know now the conditions under which they are operating. In addition, the bill includes a considerable number of my Administration's proposals. I believe these authorities will enhance our environmental and economic development goals. They will form a lasting legacy of the 1996 farm bill.

The hallmark of the bill's commodity title is the planting flexibility provisions. At long last, farmers will be free to plant for the market, not for government programs. The expansion of planting flexibility will improve U.S. competitiveness in world markets. In addition, this legislation will reduce the adverse environmental effects of production agriculture and greatly simplify farm programs.

I am very pleased with the rural development title of the bill. The Congress has incorporated the Administration's principle that we must continue our investment in traditional infrastructure while expanding the investment in information infrastructure and in human capital. These investments will ensure that all Americans, regardless of how remote an area they live in, will have the opportunity to better their lives and share in the economic growth spurred by the revolution in information technology.

My Administration is keenly aware that there is no "one size fits all" Washington solution to local economic development needs. That is why we proposed the Rural Performance Partnership Initiative, which provides flexibility to States to tailor Federal program funds to their unique